

## TOWN CLERK

One of the Town Clerk's responsibilities is chief election officer for the town and 2008 was an extremely busy and exciting year in this office. Three Stow residents ran for the State Representative position vacated by retiring State Representative Patricia Walrath. The state legislature voted to change the Presidential Primary date and an election law, both relatively close to the respective elections. In late November 2007, the legislature voted to move the Presidential Primary from March 4<sup>th</sup> to February 5<sup>th</sup>. A week prior to the November 2008 election, the legislature changed the election law related to local residency requirements. Changing both an election law and the primary date on short notice created additional work and training for city and town clerks and our election workers. We were relieved when our elections were over without any major incidents or problems.

Voter turnout in Stow ranged from a low of 359 voters at the annual town election in May to a record turnout at the polls for the Presidential election in November. 4,024 voters out of 4,667 registered voters cast ballots in the November election for a respectable eighty-six percent voter turnout. Several neighboring towns had higher percentages than Stow, but I am pleased with Stow's turnout.

We were able to handle the large turnout with little difficulty by having more voting booths set-up, including thirty new ones, and by having more election staff available to assist the voters. The longest wait occurred prior to the polls opening, when people started lining up thirty minutes before the polls opened. The polls opened at 7 a.m. and by 8 a.m. four hundred eighty-one voters had cast their ballots!

Most people do not know the amount of work that goes into election preparation nor the number of people involved, especially with high-interest elections like November's election. Assisting with polling place set-up was the volunteer crew consisting of Lew Halprin, George Scraggs, Al Tyler, Ralph Bernklow, and Ross Perry, along with Betsy MacGilvra and Tahna Hallet. The Planning Department made signs for the polling place, and volunteers in the Council on Aging helped with various preparation tasks. The staff at Hale School was also helpful, especially the custodians, the school librarian, Principal Morgan and Barbara Colleton. Then there are the election workers at the polls. The polls are open thirteen hours and the workers may be there as many as fifteen or sixteen hours assisting with opening and closing the polls. A special thank you to our dedicated election workers.

One of our dedicated election workers, Diane Lowden, passed away in October. She worked at town meeting and elections for many years. Diane, a former teacher at Pompo, was a pleasure to work with and she will be missed by all of us.

Besides elections and voter registration the town clerk is responsible for licensing dogs, collecting fines, registering businesses, processing vital records relating to births, marriages, deaths, and adoptions; administering the oath of office to town officials, board and committee members; recording filings for the planning board and zoning board of appeals, keeping the minutes for town meeting, collecting street list/census data, assisting with compliance with the Open Meeting Law and Public Records Law, and a myriad of other tasks. The town clerk's duties are actually directed by seventy-three chapters and four hundred fifty-one statutes of the Massachusetts General Laws, the Town Charter and the Stow General Bylaws.

Several people worked with me during the year. Kay Desmond, Assistant Town Clerk, is responsible for street numbering, typing all of the vital record index cards, and the vitals log book. She also assists with town meeting and various other projects over the course of the year. This position is funded for only 250 hours per year.

Kay has been Assistant Town Clerk since 1970 when my grandfather (Francis Warren) appointed her to the position previously held by my grandmother, Mary Warren. Kay is a wealth of knowledge and asset to this office and the town.

Ellie Beaudette retired as the part-time office assistant in July, though she came back to help during the very busy fall election period. We welcomed Sheila DeLeo as the new part-time office

assistant in August. She helps keep the office running smoothly and works fifteen hours a week in the clerk's office and ten hours per week in the Building Department.

Volunteer Bill Byron assisted, again this year, with the tedious task of opening all the census envelopes and collating the census forms by street address. Over 2,400 forms were sent out at the beginning of January and about 80% of the forms were returned by the end of February. A second mailing was done in March.

I look forward to next year and the new challenges that a new year brings.

#### **2008 Vital Records**

BIRTHS	65
DEATHS	16
MARRIAGES	6

*Individual vital record listings are omitted as a security precaution to deter identity theft.*

#### **Town Clerk 2008 Financial Transactions**

##### **Fees Collected**

Vital record copies, bylaws, maps, etc	\$ 1,984.40
Fines, bylaw violations, late fees	2,985.00
Business Certificate filings	540.00
Fuel storage tank registrations	10.00
Raffle permit	10.00
Dog Licenses	10,668.00
Kennel Licenses	565.00
<u>Total Fees Collected</u>	<u>\$ 16,742.40</u>